Depot Town Rag

Volume 22, Number 10

December 2007

Listen, again, to those bygone days of Santa Claus on the radio

A PUBLICATION OF THE DEPOT TOWN ASSOCIATION, INC. The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place, Ypsilanti, Michigan 48198

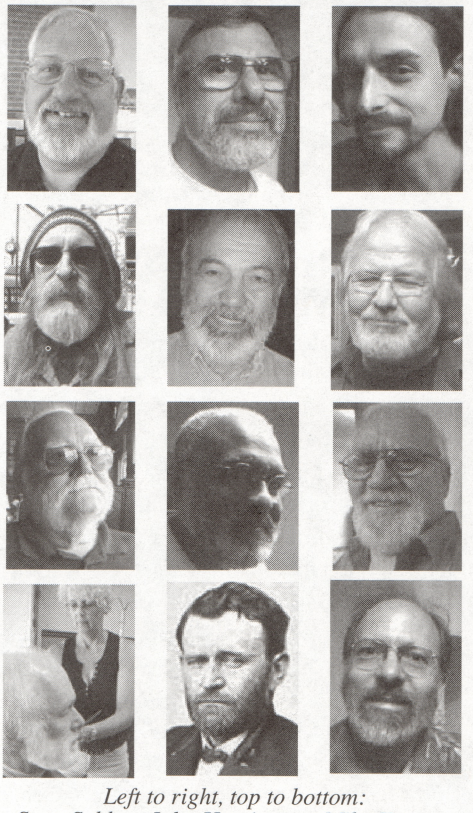
Depot kids ask, "Are you Santy?"

Some towns have centennial celebrations where all the men-folk decide it would be quaint to grow beards. And when the local hoopla is over they just can't wait to shave them off. But there's something about living, working, and hanging out around these old buildings there is that gets guys excited about growing—and keeping—their beards forever. We wouldn't know them in a bare-faced condition. They would seem naked and vulnerable. Instead, Depot Town's hirsutes look fully dressed and venerable.

Every year at this time, Depot Town's bearded beauties politely suffer the questions of tots who live in suburbia where they see fewer beards and mostly associate them with the Christmas folklore that has evolved from Father Christmas to Kris Kringle to Saint Nicholas to Santa Claus.

Groucho Marx once claimed "there ain't no Sanity Clause" in his contract, but Steve Gross's Depot Exhange antique shop used the theme one year to draw attention to our difference from the typical shopping center holiday promotions.

Our neighborhood's bountifully bearded-ones share their holiday faces at right....



Left to right, top to bottom: Scott Sobbry, John Harrington, Mike Kozura, Tim Harrison, Don Randazzo, Warren Lewis, Gary McKeever Rod Johnson, Mickey Sukach, Mike Meyers, Ulysses S. Grant, Barry LaRue

Santa-like beards on our block

Sobbry says "only the color has changed since 1971." Kozura may be the only true Santa this Christmas, with his new baby daughter; Harrison shaved his beard for his sister's wedding and says he looked like Burt Reynolds; McKeever has played Santa for many celebrations and nobody doubts his authenticity; Paula says the key criterion in trimming beards is "evenness."

For twenty-three straight years, we had U.S. Presidents with facial hair. Grant started the tradition that lasted through Hayes, Garfield, Arthur, Cleveland (moustache) and Harrison. Teddy Roosevelt broke the chain when he shaved off his moustache. [Grant stopped his special train here for ten minutes at 5 p.m. on August 19, 1865 and he still had his beard.]

Will Santy Come to *Depot Town*?

Words and Music By Eddie Arnold, Steve Nelson and Ed Nelson, Jr.

Will Santy come to Shanty Town
to a poor littly boy like me?
Will he bring me some toys
like the other girls and boys?
Will Santy come to Shanty Town
if he sees our Christmas tree?
Mommy said he would
if I promised to be good.
For we don't have a fireplace
or a chimney on our shack
Like the other lucky children have
who live across the track.
Now, if I say my pray'rs each day,
when Christmas rolls around,
Will Santy come to *Depot Town*?

Santa's Red Carpet Event

Noon - 4 p.m. Saturday, December 8

A free fun-filled day in Depot Town for all the good girls and boys

- Join Santa and Mrs. Claus for a Dr. Seuss-themed breakfast at Frenchie's
- Free photos with Santa Claus at Enchanted Florist
- Letters to Santa at Gordon's 5 & Dime

Please bring donations, new blankets and non-perishable food, for SOS and Blanket Express.

Reservations for free breakfast:
Enchanted Florist, 547.9230 or
enchantedflor46@sbcglobal.net

Good Old Days Department: Holiday special: hear Santa Claus on the RADIO!

Just for this issue of *The Rag*, cup one hand over your ear and read the following neighborhood news stories aloud. It's just like old time RADIO!

That's the spirit, Depot Town!

Tune in to an old tradition that still works just fine

The annual Christmas shopping season in Depot Town doesn't even start until December. What's up with this old commercial district anyway? Don't they know the Annual Christmas Panic started right after the Fourth of July out at the Off-Price Consumer Strip Mall?

John Tirman discusses this phenomenon in *100 Ways America Is Screwing Up The World,* and he is not blaming the folks in Depot Town"

"As a modern economic engine, Christmas is very much an American invention. Even that most sacred of American myths, Thanksgiving, was moved from the last Thursday of November (established by Abe Lincoln) to the fourth Thursday (by Franklin Roosevelt) to ensure a longer shopping season. But the shopping began long before the1930s. The rise of industrial production and the middle class in the nineteenth century carved out a niche for both consumerism and a new kind of family that nurtured domesticity, protected children, and adopted American religio-national rituals. These trends and Christmas fit perfectly together, and one might say it was no coincidence that the cultural contributions of Washington Irving and Charles Dickens and others fabricating Christmas legends appeared at the same time. (Some legends, like Rudolph the Red-Nose Reindeer, were completely commercial inventions; Rudolph was launched by Montgomery Ward in 1939.)"

The great popularity of shopping in Depot Town seems to reach back to a style in step with the district's original intent and purpose; it's a slower pace and it still pays the rent. Shoppers walk the streets, window-shop, enter the stores, and are greeted by someone they know—or at least acts like they know them. We may be on to something SMALL down here.

Lynn Radtke's '60s transistor radio at Apple Annie's/Jim MacDonald's still brings in the local stations

"...a few blocks west of the Water Tower"

Milt Barnes used to call in to radio station WJR to share stories with Bud Guest on his"Sunny Side of the Street." Bud was the son of the famed poet Edgar Guest, but Detroiters didn't hold that against him.

Barnes introduced himself in JR's pre-J.P. McCarthy and Paul W. days as "just west of the water tower, in beautiful Ypsilanti, Michigan." Barnes lived on Wallace Boulevard and, blind in his later years, he seemed to remember everything that ever happened in Ypsilanti in the greatest possible detail.

Long before they called it "Talk Radio," Barnes told stories about Ypsilanti. Milt, Bud, J.P. are gone now—but the stories keep on coming out about the good old days in Ypsilanti.

Katherine Gordon's "Airborne" model mostly gets "white noise" at Gordon's Five & Dime

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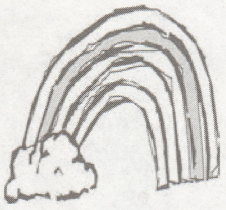

From rainbows to royalty in only thirty years

In the 1970s, Depot Town saw a plethora of businesses with "rainbow" in their names. It may have been a hold-over from the flower children of the Sixties: Rainbow Silk Screen Company, the Rainbow Press, and Rainbow Jewelry. Was it post-Hippie romanticism?

Today the rainbows have faded, but we seem to have found the pot of gold nonetheless. In the new millennium we have the presence of royalty in our neighborhood:

Now it's Queen, Quinn's, and Queen's

Queen of Hearts Pastries & Bakery
32 East Cross Street

Terry Morrow and Amanda Swords put final touches on a rasberry & cream torte

Terry Morrow brought her Queen of Hearts Pastries & Bakery, Inc. from its highly successful beginning in Saline. The Queen offers a variety of delicious pastries and baked goods daily and also offers homemade quiche, granola, coffee, espresso drinks and tea. Advance orders are taken for special occasion cakes; miniature pastries and petit four glace. All the Queen's cakes and pastries are made from scratch using the highest quality and most delicious of ingredients. Wedding cakes are prepared in the Depot Town shop and delivered in Washtenaw County and the surrounding area.

Quinn's Essentials
19 East Cross Street

Quinn's staff has stocked the shelves and is ready for the Christmas season

MaryBeth Strassel brought her special touch of elegance to the first floor of the former Follett House Hotel nine years ago-with her unique shop, Quinn's Essentials, an emporium of home décor, unique gifts, jewelry, clothing—even TempurPedic™ Mattresses. Last month Strassel announced she is retiring from her successful business.

The site of the first successful bank in the Michigan Territory has now expanded to fill three commercial bays. Quinn's features a great variety of exciting home décor products to spice up any interior space. An ever-changing product base in the store reflects unrivaled, modern country flair. Quinn's houses a mixture of reproductions as well as genuine vintage items to create unique home atmospheres. With a pleasant staff whose first priority is to assist, clients find their own "essentials" at Quinn's down in Depot Town.

Queen's Residence Bed & Breakfast,
220 South Huron Street

Joe and Marla Queen have turned the Newton mansion into Queen's Residence Bed & Breakfast, one of the most elegant inns in Southeast Michigan. Built by H. P. Glover for Samuel Barnard in 1850 the house was redesigned by Charles Newton who furnished Henry Ford's Dearborn museums. These South Huron Street digs offer a wood-burning fireplace in a 1700's English tavern, hot tub massages, a well stocked library, gentlemen's and ladies' parlors—and ballroom dance classes—in addition to elegant quarters from a quieter and more relaxing era in history.

"We're going for the romance, " say Marla, "the dancing, the hot tub, the two pergolas." A perfect holiday hideaway.

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Top: Dr. Arwulf Arwulf broadcast his Sunday morning show from Depot Town

Left: Linda Yohn tries to hide the album notes she's been reading on the air

WEMU/DTA:
a long history of support

Eastern Michigan University's public radio station and the Depot Town Association have enjoyed a long and loving relationship over the years of preservation activities:

- Co-sponsors of top quality jazz concert series in the Freighthouse
- Co-sponsors of the Frog Island Jazz Festival for many years
- Intense local coverage of news events and new projects on the block
- Public Service Announcements (PSA's) about Depot Town's hyper activity with great regularity over the years
- The station's music director, Linda Yohn and husband Bill Labedzki owned and lived in the district for several years. Labedzki's Vital Signs has now moved to their new home at the north end of River St.

Some nut was showing his oil paintings on the air

[In which the editor breaks all the standards of journalistic ethics and interviews himself]

It was sometime in the late 1980s and WAAM radio's Ted Heusel asked me to appear on his popular mid-day call-in radio show. His usual fare covered what he remembered about sledding down to the Washtenaw Dairy as a kid in medieval days, and the dangers of communist infiltration on the local library board but, in this case, he said he wanted to hear about Depot Town.

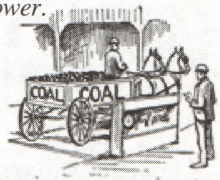
I took my dad with me and we brought along some recent oil paintings I had made of the neighborhood. To Heusel's surprise, listeners called in to describe what they "saw" in the paintings. He later said it was the most calls he had ever experienced on his show.

Lynn Tabor called from her house on Maple Street to tell who those people were "down in the foreground." Jim Monaghan called to warn us of the dangers of radicals lurking in the shadows. Others called to criticize the buildings' colors and raved about their original colors. They concluded that the colors didn't carry very well over the radio. It was a typical Depot Town conversation but—this time—people from Ann Arbor were listening. A few of them called to ask for directions to Ypsilanti.

Heusel is gone now, but the verbal tradition lives on in his place. Now, down in Depot Town, we like to keep it going—on the air or on the sidewalk.

In the next *Rag*:

At the depot on *horsepower*. Long before the cars came to this block, we met the trains with horses and wagons.



Depot Town Rag

"All the news that fits, we print"

A monthly publication of
the Depot Town Association, Inc.
The Old Caboose, 400 Market Place
Ypsilanti, MI 48197

To the editor:
thomasdodd@comcast.net

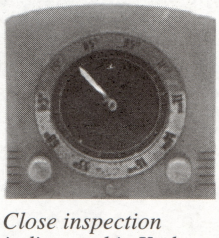
The Depot Town Association, Inc.

Gary McKeever, President
Merrill Guerra , Vice President
Carole Clare, Treasurer
Sandee French, Scy. & Past President
Website: www.depottown.org

DTA meets at 6:30 p.m on the third Wednesday of each month at Café Luwak, 42 East Cross Street...except August and December when we don't meet at all.

Pretty local radio case

-Wystan Stevens



Close inspection indicates this Kadette radio was tuned to CKLW, Windsor

This AM radio receiver, a Kadette Clockette, model K-28, assembled in Ann Arbor in 1930 by the International Radio Corporation, was sold in an eBay auction on October 2, 2007, for $1,850.00. That sum is believed to be the highest ever realized for this model -- or for any Kadette radio, in fact. The pricey collector value of this one is derived from its rare body composition—of molded Catalin plastic. Most Kadette radios were made of cheaper Bakelite plastic or of laminated wood. The auction attracted ten bids.

After a decade of production, the IRC stopped making radios and switched to 35mm cameras, becoming the Argus Camera Company.

[Editor's note: In the absence of an Ann Arbor Historical Society, The Rag *publishes occasional historical information before it is removed and forgotten.]*

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A twisted history of local RADIO

Autographed snapshot from Gugliemo Marconi. For those who do not read Italian: "My radio set is almost completed and I am eager to install it somewhere near the depot in Ypsi." Like many locals, Marconi liked to play dress-up; this time as a yachtsman.

At right: Marconi adjusts the volume while broadcasting Christmas carols onto the sidewalk in front of his combination TV repair shop and pizzeria some time before 1976

Radio Days in old Depot Town

Times change; antique radios are offered for sale in the district's antique emporia. There's the irony; Depot Town was old before radios were invented, but now they are being sold in these same buildings as antiques. Don't let that bother you; many of the technologies you have not yet adjusted to are out of date already. Your computer is a good example; obsolete the moment it left the shop.

Whoever thought something so modern and electronic as a "radio set" would ever be found in our shops? Many of us are slightly insulted when we reach the age where we see items we remember as "brand new" appearing in antique expos. Just as we celebrate the auto industry with exhibitions of antique cars and trucks, so do we find those old radios, TVs, and phonographs appearing in displays for the delight of collectors of technology. No antique oak or crystal here; vacuum tubes, turntables, Bakelite knobs, and vinyl are hallmarks of the "new collectibles."

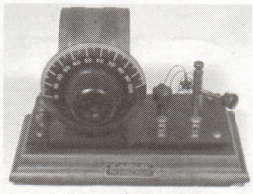
We used to have "radio sets" and "TV sets," but they did not come in a matched group. For some reason, a "set" was a singular appliance. Maybe it's something like a "pair" of pajamas—where the two parts of the pair are not at all alike? They should be called a "set" of pajamas.

TV antennae appeared above what would later become a sports bar here and purists wondered if we were going to spoil our historic skyline. We had blocked the railroad's telegraph poles and lines from our collective memory and thought we could hear the drum beats of Native Americans in the nearby woods.

Technology has not passed us by. Instead, we simply sit here and wait for the technology to come back and catch up to us.

Memorabilia found in our antique shops presents a history of radio technology

- **Crystal set**
  Almost as old as the store it is sold in today
- **Crosley radio**
  "AM" did not mean "morning radio"
- **Radio and/or heater**
  First two auto options after WWII
- **Dashboard car radio w/ push buttons**
  Almost as dangerous as today's cell phones?
- **78 rpm records/ 33 1/3 rpm records**
  Caruso sings for Grandma. Wind it up again.
- **Bendix/RCA green-eye push-button home console radio**
  A favorite uncle convinced us that "Happy Hank" could see us from his broadcast studio every morning as we prepared for school
- **Radio/phonograph console**
  Storage for records and liquor in there, too.
- **First TV antenna on the block**
  "They're ruining the neighborhood!" Little did we know; they ruied our brains
- **Radio/TV console**
  All your entertainment applicances squashed into a wood veneered box the size of the dining room buffet
- **Hi-Fi**
  Unlike the rest of the Sixties, fidelity mattered in our phonograph records
- **Stereophonic sound**
  Sound in 3-D; it's like sitting on the concert stage with the band! Best seat in the house!
- **Portable 8-track**
  Dad carried all Marty Robbin's tunes around with him in his old Craftsman tool box
- **Muzak/elevator music**
  "Raindrops keep falling on my head..."
- **Boom Box – w/ audio tape**
  "Hey, kid. Bring that thing over here on the dock; let's see if it floats."
- **Walkman**
  "Zzzzt, zzzt." Hey! What's that noise?
- **Home theater**
  Fill your basement with picture and sound; invite the neighbors over (see 1953 TV)
- **MP3 streaming**
  Radio, TV, and the blogosphere rolled into one
- **iThingies**
  Tiny box holds thousands of downloads—if you know what that is
- **Satellite radio**
  For an immodest monthly fee, you can hear Howard Stern talk dirty 24/7



A good crystal set could bring in St. Louis on a clear day

This favorite 1930's table-topper was last seen in a neighborhood garage sale, painted flat white with a fabric insert of purple and gold paisley. Goodbye, old friend.

Bakelite in decorator colors

Totally modern Sputnik style radio is not a BBQ

iPod; stick it in your ear, take pictures with it, whatever, dude!

A lot like radio...but with pictures...
Depot Town on the web: depottown.org

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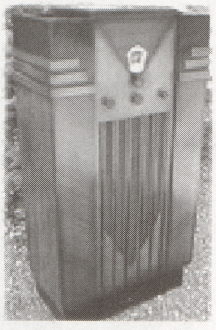
Tune in to the *good* news down in Ypsilanti's historic Depot Town this season!



A modest proposal for the next calendar year

When the 2008 calendars arrive in the mail, Depot Town supporters are encouraged to switch the February and August pages to enjoy a much more reasonable year down in this active commercial district.

With this new line-up of months, Heritage Festival will follow the "January slump" and who would mind shoveling sidewalks right after the oppressive heat of July? It's one district's answer to global warming.

Neighboring business districts will marvel at the promotional weather conditions in old Depot Town and more will undoubtedly follow suit by 2009.

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RAGTIME

It's Christmas in the city

Friday, 7-midnight 30 November

Moonlight Madness

Specials in our stores and restaurants
Christmas carolers invited

Tree Lighting at "dark:30"

1 December, 5 p.m.
Depot Town's annual

Window Judging

Extra credit for railroad themes

Christmas Bazaar

Saturday, December 1 • 9 am-3 pm

St. Luke's Episcopal Church
120 North Huron Street • Ypsilanti
www.stlukesypsi.org

1 December, 6:30 p.m.-9 p.m.
2 December, Noon - 4 p.m.

Heritage Holidays & Home Tour

Saturday, December 8

Santa's Red Carpet Event

[See page one for reservation details]

Sunday, December 9

Stuff Your Stocking Night

Get a stocking for $2 from Café Luwak and fill it with lovely yet inexpensive items from seven Depot Town stores: Christmas ornaments, old-timey candy, mini-maracas, Ypsi-themed notecards, organic treats—all under $5!

Saturday, December 15

Gingerbread Men

at Gordon's Five & Dime baked by the Queen of Hearts. Decorate them with a variety of Gordon's Five & Dime candies. Join the fun for just one dollar!

December 31

New Year Jubilee of Southeastern Michigan

Family entertainment at dozens of locations in Depot Town and downtown

Depot Bells

Let's all sing along...

-"Silver Bells" from the picture "The Lemon Drop Kid" with Bob Hope & Marilyn Maxwell. Music and Lyrics by Jay Livingston and Ray Evans, 1951.

Silver bells, silver bells
it's Christmas time in the city
ring-a-ling, hear them ring
soon it will be Christmas day!

City sidewalks, busy sidewalks
dressed in holiday style
in the air there's a feeling of Christmas!

Children laughing, people passing
meeting smile after smile
and on every street corner you'll hear . . .

Silver bells, silver bells
it's Christmas time in the city
ring-a-ling, hear them ring
soon it will be Christmas day!

Critics of popular culture predict the return of such old values and local experts say they never left. Window shopping, smiling at our neighors in the street, and giving good wishes for the holiday are customs that have continued through the ages in this old commercial district.

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